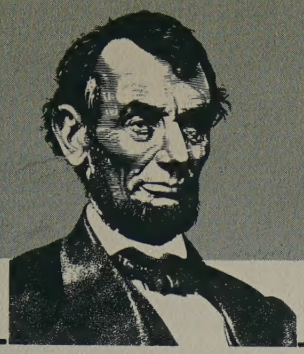

Lincoln Lore

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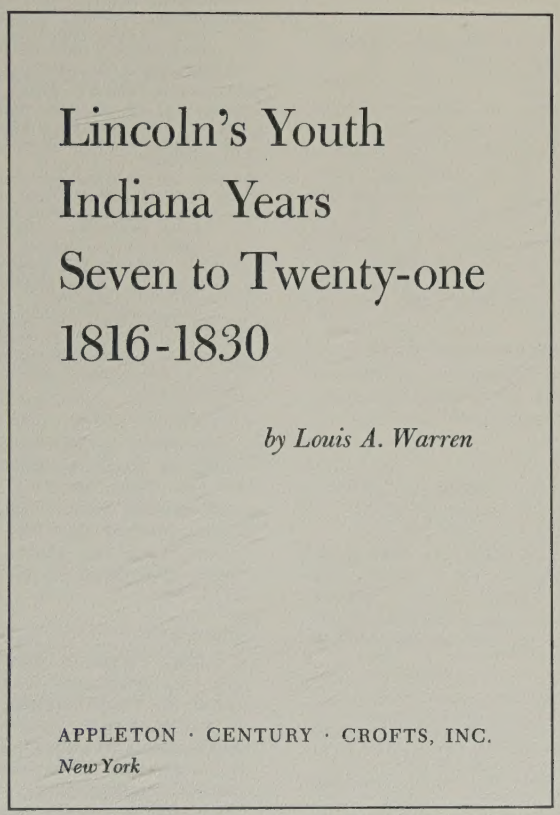
LINCOLN'S YOUTH

Indiana Years—Seven to Twenty-One (1816-1830)

By Louis A. Warren

Review by Dr. Holman Hamilton, Associate Professor of History, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky.

Abraham Lincoln has strong appeal for two very different categories of admirers. The first classification is a large one, consisting of masses of non-specialists both in the United States and beyond our borders in the far reaches of the world. The second is limited to a relatively small group of Lincoln students who know a great deal about the Sixteenth President and are familiar with details of his life, personality, character, and influence. People in each category are likely to benefit from *Lincoln's Youth* by Louis A. Warren. It seems probable that the highlights of the book will be enjoyed by a literate portion of the general public. And specialists certainly will be deeply interested in both the overview and the particulars of the author's intriguing presentation of Lincoln's Indiana years.



Dr. Warren's self-selected assignment was by no means an easy one to carry out. He really had four jobs to perform. First of all, it was his duty to brush away the obfuscations of myth and tradition for which William H. Herndon and others were responsible. Secondly, he had to dig in basic source materials whenever he could locate them, constructing his story on the rock of solid evidence. The third challenge was that of composition, for without a lucid account of his findings the effect of his labor would be ephemeral. Finally, and in some ways most important of all, it was essential that the delver and narrator would not shrink from interpretation—for who is better qualified to pass judgment on a man, a movement, or a mission than one who has spent most of his life concentrating on studies of that very topic?

Nowhere in his volume has Dr. Warren permitted his text to anticipate Lincoln's fame. His account of the future Chief Executive's experiences and growth has been set forth as one might present the childhood, adolescence, and young manhood of any son of pioneer parents in the Indiana wilderness. The author's aim in this regard was commendable. The restraint he demonstrates in execution will excite the respect of readers and especially of other writers, whose ventures into similar fields have made them conscious of perilous pitfalls. To compensate for anticipations omitted from chapter after chapter, developmental material is documented in the notes, often in Lincoln's own words. In that way, the early days are linked to later ones—while the atmosphere of contemporaneousness is textually maintained. This achievement was no inconsiderable feat, in view of the variety of problems appearing along the research path.

One of the hardest and most admirable things for a biographer to do is to say frankly to his reader, "I do not know." When at times Dr. Warren admits lack of knowledge on a major or minor point, it is only after the most exhaustive examination of courthouse, census, and other records—many of them previously ignored by generations of historians. Anybody who has extracted fugitive information from deed, estray, or will books knows that the arduous labor entailed is a far cry from what a friend of mine calls cloud-hopping or peak-to-peak history. Still, just as there is no true synthesis without thesis and antithesis, a leader's emergence from obscurity cannot be satisfactorily explained without weighing grubby little facts or puncturing the gaudy balloons of legend. In *Lincoln's Youth* both functions are duly performed with the preliminary aid of such materials as the court order books kept in Perry and Pike counties, Indiana; marriage registers from Spencer and Warrick counties; a minute book of the Little Pigeon Association of United Baptists, and the valuable ledger and day book of Bleakley & Montgomery, merchants in Elizabethtown, Ky.

Cited at various times are early newspapers, notably the Vincennes *Western Sun;* biographical data printed in Lincoln's lifetime, on which he passed before publication; textbooks and classics studied or read by Lincoln when he lived in Indiana, and poetry composed by him in middle life which reflected episodes connected with his boyhood. The analyses of such volumes as Dilworth's speller, Scott's *Lessons in Elocution,* and *The Kentucky Preceptor* seem especially apropos. Commendable, too, was the choice of the famous child psychologist Dr. Arnold Gesell to compose the introduction; his professional contribution complements and compliments the author's in an illuminating way. Has the book no flaws?

(Continued to page 4)

SOME LINCOLN LETTERS AND DOCUMENTS THAT RELATE TO INDIANA

Foundation Collection

In building the Foundation collection of Abraham Lincoln manuscripts considerable thought has been given to the acquiring of letters and documents that relate to Indiana men in particular and to Hoosier affairs in general. The following selected items have a particular interest for one reason or another.

Through Indianapolis . . .

Lincoln left Indiana, where he had resided for a period of fourteen years, in early March of 1830. He returned for a visit in 1844, and his second visit was in September (17) of 1855 when he traveled by rail to Cincinnati, Ohio, where he was to undergo a humiliating experience in connection with the McCormick Reaper Case.

Lincoln's third visit to Indiana was on September 19, 1859 when he appeared at Indianapolis for the first time in his life before a large Indiana audience. Indiana's capital was an important city on his Columbia, Dayton, Hamilton, Cincinnati and Indianapolis itinerary.

While planning his itinerary to Ohio, Lincoln used the facilities of the Illinois & Mississippi Telegraph Company to contact W. T. Bascom at Columbus, Ohio:

Springfield, Ill. Sept. 13, 1859

W. T. Bascom
Columbus, Ohio.

Through Indianapolis. Reach Columbus at seven seventeen p.m. Thursday. What about Reporters?

A. Lincoln.

The Indianapolis *Atlas* of September 19, 1859 in reporting Lincoln's speech made the following comments: "Appearing at the capital of this now great State, and traveling through a good portion of it in coming from Cincinnati, had combined to revive his recollections of the earlier years of his life. Away back in the fall of 1816, when he was in his eighth year, his father brought him over from the neighboring state of Kentucky and settled in the state of Indiana, and he grew up to his present enormous height on our own good soil of Indiana."

". . . lest he (Henry Winter Davis) be compromitted . . ."

The earliest Lincoln letter in the Foundation collection of Indiana interest was addressed by Lincoln to the Hon. Richard W. Thompson of Terre Haute, Indiana.

Private
Hon: R. W. Thompson:[1]

Springfield, Ills.
June 18, 1860

My dear Sir:

Your long letter of the 12th is just received, and read. I write this to thank you for it; and to say I would like for you to converse freely with Hon: Henry Winter Davis.[2] And lest he be compromitted, by inference from this, let me say that he and I never met, or corresponded. Very truly your friend.

A. Lincoln

1. "Thompson's letter of June 12, in reply to Lincoln's non-extant letter of May 26, expressed gratification at Lincoln's nomination and gave the option in regard to running a Bell ticket in Indiana that 'We should by holding off in the doubtful states let you carry them. . . . You must not infer from the above that I shall vote for you, although if it should turn out that we have no electoral ticket . . . that I may do so is possible.' "
2. "Henry Winter Davis, a cousin of Lincoln's friend David Davis, was Republican representative in Congress from Baltimore, Maryland. A former Know-Nothing, and earlier a Whig, his Southern extraction as well as his marked ability gave him a considerable following and influence in the border states."

   Editorial comment taken from *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Roy P. Basler, Editor, Marion Dolores Pratt and Lloyd A. Dunlap, Assistant Editors, Vol. IV, page 79.

"I wish you would watch Chicago a little"

Again on July 10, 1860 Lincoln wrote Thompson

Private
Hon. R. W. Thompson:[1]

Springfield, Ills.
July 10, 1860

Dear Sir:

Yours of the 6th. is received, and for which I thank you. I write this to acknowledge the receipt of it, and to say I take time (only a little) before answering the main matter.

If my *record* would *hurt* any, there is no hope that it will be over-looked; so that if friends can *help* any with it, they may as well do so. Of course, due caution and circumspection, will be used.

With reference to the same matter, of which you write, I wish you would watch Chicago a little. They are getting up a movement for the 17th. Inst. I believe a line from you to John Wilson,[2] late of the Genl. Land Office (I guess you know him well) would fix the matter.

When I shall have reflected a little, you will hear from me again.

Yours very truly

A. Lincoln.

Burn this.

1. "Thompson's letter of July 6 recounted plans of the Indiana Constitutional Unionists to run a Bell electoral ticket, which he opposed, and said that one of his chief arguments was that Lincoln, if elected, would not be 'led into ultraism by radical men, but your administration will be national. If I could succeed in fixing this influence upon their mind, I should have little difficulty.' He added that he wished to see Lincoln and 'talk about some things that you ought not to write about,' but that if he came to Springfield it would 'get into the papers.' Lincoln sent Nicolay to Terre Haute, Indiana, to interview Thompson a few days later."
2. "John Wilson was appointed commissioner of the General Land Office under President Fillmore."

   Editorial comment taken from *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. IV, pages 82-83.

Editor's Note: It is of interest to point out that when Lincoln sent John G. Nicolay, his private secretary to Terre Haute, Indiana, to visit Thompson he carried with him the following (c. July 16, 1860) instructions:

> Ascertain what he wants.
> On what subjects he would converse with me.
> And the particulars if he will give them.
> Is an interview indispensable?
> Tell him my motto is "Fairness to All,"
> But commit me to nothing.

Basler, Roy P. & Others: *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. IV, page 83.

On the back side of Lincoln's letter of July 10, 1860 (folded blue stationery bearing an embossed imprint "Congress Carew Co.) Thompson wrote: "A few letters from A. Lincoln during the presidential campaign of 1860. Some were destroyed because especially confidential."

"the release of . . . Indiana Regiments from that Siberia"

Early in Lincoln's administration he had considerable political pressure brought on him in regard to military affairs. This letter of an Indiana congressman to a general, which bears Lincoln's endorsement, is an example. On December 12, 1861 Schuyler Colfax, then a representative from the state of Indiana, addressed a letter to General George B. McClellan as follows:

House of Rep. Washn. Dec, 12, 1861

General:

I have written you twice, urging the removal of the 9th Ind. Regiment and their brave General Milroy, all of them my constituents, from the Cheat Mountain Summit to some region where they can see an enemy. Any New Regiment can guard a mountain half as well as they who have proved by repeated conflicts, with the enemy, some of them under your own eye, in Western Virginia, that they are amongst the bravest of the brave. Others in Indiana, more influential than myself, have procured the release of other Indiana Regiments from that Siberia to fields where they will have a chance to fight instead of to freeze. All of Milroy's Brigade (3 Ohio Regiments) have left, but the Regiments of my neighbors, despite their brilliant service hitherto, seem specially marked for a winter of inactivity at the Summit.

Gen. Cameron promised to intercede with you specially for their removal. My colleage, Col. McKee Dunn, asked it urgently last fall. I now beg and earnestly entreat you to releave them. They would prefer going to South Carolina; but Kentucky, Washington, any where where they can fight rebels, they long for. In Kentucky, with our new Ind. Regiments, you could easily make an Indiana Brigade for Gen. Milroy.

Resp. Yr.
Schuyler Colfax

Gen. G. B. McClellan

The President endorsed the Colfax letter as follows: "I would be very glad for Mr. Colfax to be obliged in the matter within, if at all consistent with the public service. A. Lincoln, Dec. 13, 1861."

"Respectfully submitted to the Secretary of War"

John S. Tarkington (the father of the celebrated novelist Booth Tarkington) had an occasion to address the Governor of Indiana on May 3, 1862:

Indianapolis, May 3rd, 1862

Dear Governor:

I write you to ask that you will do what you can, to have Cap. William C. Tarkington transferred to regular army with same rank. He has been brigade Commissary since August 1861 on General Reynold's Staff at Cheat Mountain. He was the head of the Commissary department of Gen. Reynold's Army and the General told me himself that he was "the right man in the right place," and they could not have got through the winter without him. He was at Greenbriar fight and *in* it as much as any one man there. He was placed on General Lander's staff, a few weeks before the General died, as Commissary of Division, and when General Shields was placed in command, he was continued as Division Commissary and now remains such. He was at Genl. Shields' side when the Genl. had his arm injured by a shell the evening before the main fight at Winchester, and it was to him the Genl. remarked not to mention the occurrence. His performance of his duties I have heard praised enthusiastically by every man & officer, with whom I have conversed, from Cheat Mountain, Elk Water & the Army of Western Virginia last winter, and the division of General Shields. His life has been such as to deprive him of that opportunity to invigorate and keep up his health. His duties now agree with him, and he enjoys better health and spirits than ever.

I do not speak of him as meritorious because he is my uncle, simply. You know his energy as well as I, and his faculty for business & dispatch. His best recommendation is the condition of his department. Everything is always ready, as any one from the Army where he is will testify. He likes the campaign life and desires the transfer to the regular army, so as to continue as he is. Until the transfer is affected, it is nothing more than what he deserves, and what the responsibility of his position required as division commissary, that he be promoted to "Commissary of Subsistence with the rank of major." I think you will find Congressmen Dunn, Porter, etc. who will assist. You know I would like to see him prosper, and any favor you can do him will add to the already great obligations to you of

Your friend
John S. Tarkington.

This letter was endorsed by the president as follows: Respectfully submitted to the secretary of war, A. Lincoln, May 18, 1862.

"This recommendation being by nearly all of the Indiana delegation . . ."

On December 1, 1862 John T. Morrison wrote the Secretary of War the following letter:

Washington City
Dec. 1, 1862

Sir:

I would respectfully ask the appointment of Quartermaster with the rank of Captain in the military service of the Government.

I am respectfully
John T. Morrison

Hon. E. M. Stanton
Secretary of War

On the same letter is written the following endorsement: I take pleasure in urging the above appointment. Mr. Morrison is most worthy and competent. His appointment would be most gratifying to his numerous friends in Indiana and none more than the undersigned.

Jno. S. Maples

Dec. 1, 1862

Another endorsement follows:

I concur most cordially in the above request. H. S. Laws.

A third endorsement states:

We concur in the above request

A. G. Porter	J. A. Cravins
W. M. Dunn	Schuyler Colfax
Wm. Mitchell	Geo. W. Julian
W. S. Holman	John P. C. Shanks

Lincoln's endorsement appears on the back side of the folded sheet: This recommendation being by nearly all of the Indiana delegation, I wish the appointment made if can consistently be done. A Lincoln. December 4, 1862.

Under Lincoln's endorsement is found the following note: Approved & Appt. ordered. Edwin M. Stanton, Sec. of War.

"The State of Indiana . . ."

One of the finest letters (see *Lincoln Lore* Number 1455, May 1959), from the viewpoint of historical significance, to be found in the Foundation collection was written by Lincoln to Major General William T. Sherman on September 19, 1864. The letter in the handwriting of Lincoln's secretary bearing the president's signature follows:

Executive Mansion
Washington, D. C.
September 18, 1864

Major General Sherman[1]

The State Election of Indiana occurs on the 11th. of October, and the loss of it to the friends of the Government would go far towards losing the whole Union cause. The bad effect upon the November election, and especially the giving the State Government to those who will oppose the war in every possible way, are too much to risk, if it can possibly be avoided. The draft proceeds, notwithstanding its strong tendency to lose us the State. Indiana is the only important State, voting in October, whose soldiers cannot vote in the field. Anything you can safely do to let her soldiers, or any part of them. go home and vote at the State election, will be greatly in point. They need not remain for the presidential election, but may return to you at once. This is, in no sense, an order, but is merely intended to impress you with the importance, to the army itself, of your doing all you safely can, yourself being the judge of what you can safely do.

Yours truly
A. Lincoln.

1. "On September 12, 1864, Governor Morton, Indiana Republicans in Congress, and others wrote Stanton: 'We express it as our profound conviction that upon the issue of the election that occurs within a month from this date may depend the question as to whether the secession element shall be effectually crushed or whether it shall acquire strength enough, we do not say to take the state out of the Union, but practically to sever her from the general government, so far as future military aid is concerned.
'We further express the gravest doubts as to whether it will be possible for us to secure success at the polls on the 11th of October unless we can receive aid—

'2. By delay of the draft until the election has passed.

'2. By the return, before election day, of fifteen thousand Indiana soldiers.' "
(William Dudley Foulke, *Life of Oliver P. Morton*, 1,367).

"On September 18 Stanton replied: 'It appears from a dispatch received from General Sherman last night that his army is jealously watching whether the draft will be suspended or enforced.' The general says: 'If the president modifies it to the extent of one man, or wavers in its execution, he is gone. Even the Army would vote against him.' "You can judge from this what effect the recall of troops and delaying the draft is likely to have on your election."

Editorial comment taken from *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. VII, pages 11-12.

ELECTION—1864

"Who wrote the Chicago platform? Vallandigham.

"Who stands upon it? McClellan.

"Who owns McClellan? Belmont.

"Who owns Belmont? The Rothschilds.

"What do the Rothschilds own? Confederate bonds" "

Dailey Illinois State Journal
Springfield, November 8, 1864

LINCOLN'S YOUTH

(Continued from page 1)

Some historians have disagreed with Dr. Warren in the past on the subject of Nancy Hanks Lincoln's parentage. No doubt they will be skeptical of the assertion that Lincoln's mother was the "daughter of James and Lucy (Shipley) Hanks." Indeed, the reviewer acknowledges that he himself is far more receptive to the subsequent statement that James Hanks "cannot be positively identified."

If this aspect of Lincoln's heredity proves to be a bone of contention, other criticism may be directed against the less than solid structure of certain Herndon material and the uneven quality of county histories and old people's reminiscences, on which Dr. Warren sometimes has to depend for want of superior primary sources. On these points, however, it should be borne in mind that no one has proved warier of Herndonian limitations than the author of *Lincoln's Youth*. Both in Herndon-penetrated areas and in those shadowy precincts where miscellaneous antiquarians have wandered, Dr. Warren has made a tremendous effort to be judiciously selective and to post "Danger!" signs when findings are of dubious merit. Incidental errors may be discovered here or there. On the whole, however, high scholarly standards have been conscientiously maintained.

All details, of course, are secondary to the overall effect of the book. And, looking at *Lincoln's Youth* in its entirety, the reviewer's reaction is most favorable. Extraordinarily handsome in its physical appearance, the volume has much to commend it stylistically—many of its contents creating the impression of having been pruned and polished to a perfectionist's taste. It is even more remarkable that the intellectual, vocational, social, and spiritual climate of Lincoln's youth has been so faithfully re-created despite the multiplicity of research handicaps. The tone is convincing, the atmosphere compelling. Lincoln's father, his stepmother, his sister, his brother-in-law, and the combined family and neighborhood pictures seem true to the southern Indiana of that era and equally true to the personalities involved. Most significant is the fact that, without employing artifices, Dr. Warren has gone far toward explaning the "Why?" of Lincoln—the beginnings of a world figure's growth to greatness. He has succeeded in this regard because he has arranged events and incidents on an orderly, year-by-year basis, something never previously achieved in a sustained narrative of the Indiana period.

How important were Lincoln's fourteen years in Indiana? I hold that they were vitally important. When the young man of twenty-one crossed the Wabash River at Vincennes and trekked on in Illinois, he could write well, he could speak well, and before the passage of many months he would give convincing proof that qualities of natural leadership were his. As captain of the Illinois militia in the Black Hawk War, as a member and leader of the Illinois General Assembly, as a presidential elector at the age of thirty-one, as a member of Congress in his thirties, and up into the echelons of sterner challenges and loftier accomplishments, Lincoln relied on and benefited from lessons learned in the Hoosier State.

Years ago, Professor James G. Randall (who afterward was President of the American Historical Association) asked rhetorically: "Has the Lincoln theme been exhausted?" He answered his own question with a ringing "No!" The energetic and resourceful Dr. Warren, who made such a fine contribution as the longtime editor of *Lincoln Lore* and Director of the Lincoln National Life Foundation, has now provided fresh and enduring evidence that the late distinguished Illinois scholar was abundantly right in his contention.

LINCOLN'S BEST MONUMENT

"The Incorruptible: The Stockton *Independent* calls Abraham Lincoln the incorruptible, and says: 'In an age of money grabbing and universal extravagance, our good president's honesty and republican simplicity shone with such resplendence as even to disarm the malice of his most malignant enemy.' This sentiment, inscribed on the Nation's heart, is Lincoln's best monument."

Weekly American Flag, San Francisco, California
April 29, 1865

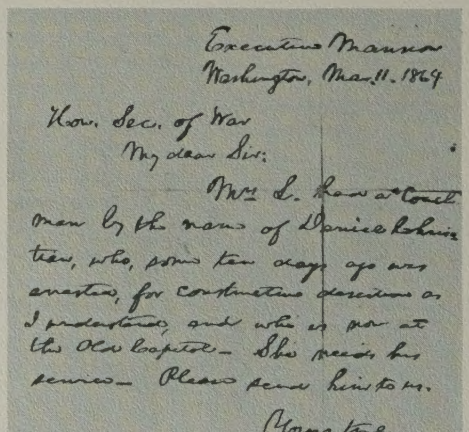
AN ATTEMPT TO THROW THE PRESIDENTIAL TRAIN FROM THE TRACK

From The Lafayette, (Ind.) *Journal*

"We were on Saturday night placed in possession of the astounding information that an attempt was made, on Monday last, to wreck the train bearing the president elect and suite about one mile west of the State Line. The particulars, as given us by Mr. Charles Rich of the T. & W. R. R. are, that a short time before the train was due at State Line, an engineer who was preparing to take a train, found it necessary to run out to the wood yard for fuel. Running at moderate speed, he noticed an obstruction on the track and stopping his engine, found that a machine for putting cars on the track had been fastened upon the rails in such a manner, that if a train at full speed, had struck it, engine and cars must have been thrown off and many persons killed. It is almost impossible to think that any one is so thoroughly depraved as to attempt so damnable a deed, but we are assured by our informant that his information comes from undoubted authority. The matter would have been made public before, but it was hoped that the perpetrators of the dastardly outraged could be detected and brought to justice. The whole thing was admirably planned, the obstruction so near a station, and on a straight track, where it would not be deemed necessary to exercise any great degree of caution. If the facts are as stated to us, the escape of the train is miraculous."

Weekly Northwestern Gazette
Galena, Illinois,
February 26, 1861.

Editor's Note: Lincoln's inaugural train, consisting of an engine, baggage-car, and passenger coach, arrived at Indiana State Line about noon on Monday, February 11, 1861. The train was the property of the Great Western Railroad, which was detailed to carry the presidential party to the Indiana-Illinois state line where the Tolono and Wabash Railroad would then take charge of the party as far as Lafayette, Indiana. The newspapers generally reported that the trip between Springfield, Illinois, and Indianapolis, Indiana, was without accident or special incident. Lincoln made a short speech at State Line and he and his party were served a luncheon at the State Line Hotel. Upon departing, a Mr. Burrows, the superintendent of the Valley Road, had charge of the train, in person, and he saw to it that the train left State Line on time. At Lafayette another change was made to the Lafayette and Indianapolis Railroad. Lincoln reached Indianapolis about five o'clock p.m. (See *Lincoln Lore* Number 32, November 18, 1929.)
An account of the attempted wreck of Lincoln's inaugural train also appeared in the February 22, 1861 issue of *The Baltimore Sun.*



Executive Mansion
Washington, Mar. 11. 1864

Hon. Sec. of War
My dear Sir:

Mrs L. knows a Court man by the name of Daniel Robinson, who, some ten days ago was arrested, for constructive desertion as I understand, and who is now at the Old Capitol. She needs his services. Please send him to us.

Yours truly
A. Lincoln

From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

"Constructive desertion" is a legal term. Due to certain facts, conduct, circumstances or instruments Daniel Christian was arrested for "constructive desertion" but the alleged crime "has not the character assigned to it in its own essential nature, but acquires such character in consequence of the way in which it is regarded by a rule or policy of law, hence, inferred, implied, made out by legal interpretation . . ."